

Visual Representations of the Unemployed (London 12-13 Dec 08)

Visual Representations of the Unemployed

German Historical Institute London and the University of Exeter

Friday 12th December - Saturday 13th December 2008, Poldhu Room, Kay
Labs, University of Exeter

The unemployed are one of the most stereotyped social groups in modern society, depicted as dangerous criminals, lazy loafers, prey for political demagogues, completely apathetic, happy scroungers or demoralized and desperate individuals. These stereotypes have been peddled in visual as well as literary sources, and yet the former has attracted little scholarly attention. This conference will examine Western representations of the unemployed in the fine arts, film, photography and cartoons and explore the iconology of unemployment and whether it is separate and distinct from the iconology of poverty; the signifiers and symbols used to represent the unemployed and how these have changed over the course of the twentieth century; the cultural differences in representations; and the relationship between images of the unemployed and their status in society.

Friday, 12th December

2.00 - 2.30 Registration and Welcome

2.30 - 4.00 Session 1: Foundations

* Jens Jäger (Cologne University): To See is to Believe? Images and Social History.

* Andreas Gestrich (GHI London): Visual Representations of Poverty and Idleness in the Early Modern Period.

4.00 - 4.45 Session 2: The Arts

* Ute Wrocklage (University of Hamburg): Representations of the Unemployed in German Art before the First World War.

4.45 - 5.15 Coffee Break

5.15 - 7.00 Session 3: Film

* Matt Perry (University of Newcastle): Visualising Unemployment through the Aesthetics of Capitalist Modernity: Case Studies in Films from the 1930s.

* Steve Cannon (University of Sunderland): 'Social Realism' and Unemployment in Contemporary European Cinema.

7.30 Conference Dinner

Saturday, 13th December

9.00 - 10.30 Session 4: Photography

* Jeannette Gabriel (College of Mount Saint Vincent, New York): Pink Slips on Parade: Building the Unemployed Movement through Images of Everyday Protest, 1935-1939.

* Antoine Capet (University of Rouen, France): Photographs of the British Unemployed in the Inter-War Years: Representation or Manipulation?

10.30 - 11.00 Coffee Break

11.00 - 12.30 Session 5: Cartoons

* Matthias Reiss (University of Exeter): Dragon Slayers and Dole Queues: Unemployment and the Unemployed in German Political Cartoons, 1974 to 1998.

* Nicholas Hiley (University of Kent at Canterbury): "If we only had a job, we could take a holiday": Unemployment in British Political Cartoons of the last Hundred Years.

12.30 - 1.00 Final Comment and Discussion

* Christopher Burgess (People's History Museum, Manchester)

1.00 Buffet Lunch and Departure

Further information can be obtained at the following web address:

<http://www.huss.ex.ac.uk/history/conferences/index.php>

ArtHist.net

Please direct enquiries to Dr Matthias Reiss, Department of History,
University of Exeter (M.Reiss@ex.ac.uk).

Reference:

CONF: Visual Representations of the Unemployed (London 12-13 Dec 08). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 1, 2008
(accessed Mar 21, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/30892>>.